



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 17:11-19

“Jesus Praying for the Apostles: Part II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] We are continuing the study of the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John, and we are looking at that section of the 17th chapter in which our Lord is praying for his apostles. And last week, for some of you who were not here, we looked at verses 6 through 10 of John chapter 17, in which our Lord identifies those for whom he will pray.

And now we're looking at the section in which he specifically prays that they might be kept and that they might be sanctified, and so verse 11 is the continuation of the prayer, “And now (Jesus says) I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”

Now let me stop for just a moment, because I know many of you have a modern translation in your hands, such as the New American Standard Bible, or the New International Version, or similar version. You, if you were listening and noting what I was reading in your own text before you, and were not dreaming, then you noticed a rather significant difference. This text reads, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me.” Now that is a biblical expression, because just previously Jesus has said that the apostles for whom he prays are ones that are given him by the Father. So the idea is a scriptural idea. Unfortunately, in many of the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament instead of “keep through Thine own name those whom Thou

hast given me” those texts read, “keep them in Thy name the name that Thou hast given me.” And so instead of the individuals being called “given one” the name is that which is given. Now the difference in theology is inconsequential. The difference in the text of course, means that we expound it in a slightly different way depending on the text that we use. I want you to notice that because it occurs in the next verse as well. It’s not a serious thing, but if you’re reading carefully and listening, you’ll note the difference.

Verse 12 continues, “While I was with them in the world, I used to keep them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Now again, if you have a newer version it will read something like this, “While I was with them in the world, I used to keep them in Thy name: which Thou hast given me” that is the name instead of the individuals. Verse 13,

“And now (Jesus says again) I come to Thee; (evidently our Lord was anxious to return to the Father, twice in this section he mentions it, “I’m coming to Thee”) and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath (loved them [Laughter] the poor old world, so ignorant of its hatred of the truth of Christ, so) I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest keep them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. (Now this word, evil, in the original text is a word that could be neuter or masculine in gender, and it’s possible to render it as the version that I’m holding has rendered it, but in almost every case in which this expression or one similar to it occurs, it is a reference to a personal, masculine, evil one, and that is the likely meaning here, and so we should read it, “that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one” a reference of course to Satan.) They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”

We are accustomed to think of sanctification as something that has to do with inward moral holiness, or separation to God. It is obvious that our Lord is not using the word in that sense here, for he says in the 19th verse, “I sanctify myself” but he needed no such improvement of holiness. So it is evident that the Old Testament sense of the consecration of an object to the purpose and will of God is what is in mind. And so what he prays for us is reflected in what he says that he doing of himself.

Now we don’t have time to look into the Old Testament, but it is rather striking that the New Testament word for sanctify is almost entirely a biblical word. In classical Greek the word that is used for “to sanctify” is a term that is not used in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament Greek translation, and in the New Testament, we have a word that is almost entirely biblical in force, and it is almost synonymous with the dedication of an object for purposes of sacrifice, and that of course is what our Lord is speaking about here. When he asks that we be sanctified it is that we might be sanctified to a particular purpose of God for us. That is a mission that he has give to us, the apostles and us, their successors. For himself it is the dedication of himself to a purpose. And that purpose is, as you know, his death. May the Lord bless this reading of his word, let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come to Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful for all that is signified by the name of Jesus Christ, all that he is, all that he has said, all that he has done. We thank Thee that all the promises of God are yea and amen in him, through the name that Thou hast given to him. And we thank Thee Lord that Thou hast given us to him. And then, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit Thou hast brought us to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal. And today Lord, on the Lord’s day, how wonderful it is to lift our minds and hearts to Thee and call Thee our eternal Father. We thank Thee that we are eternally secure in the purpose of God. In the hands of a loving Father we have no uncertainty with regard to

the future. We praise Thee, we worship Thy name, we are indeed grateful. We look forward to the day when we shall return to Thee in the fullness of the salvation Thou hast provided.

We thank Thee for these magnificent words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, how revealing they are of the relationship that he enjoyed with Thee, and we thank Thee that we are able to enter into them and understand something of that relationship. And may we too, Lord, have a similar relationship. We thank Thee and praise Thee for all of the provisions of life. For the church of Jesus Christ we ask Lord Thy blessing upon her. In all of the activities of the church may Thy hand be seen and may Thy sovereign glory be maintained.

We pray Lord for the world; we ask O God that there may be, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the separation of Thine elect individuals from the world, may they be brought to knowledge of the Lord Jesus and receive the eternal salvation. And may Thy purposes with regard to this globe be accomplished. We look forward to them, in that magnificent day in the future, when the Gentiles and the Jews shall find their unity in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for our country. We pray Lord for the ministry of the Chapel, its elders, its deacons, its members, its friends; Lord we bring them all to Thee. We pray that through the work of the Holy Spirit we may be strengthened in our faith, and useful to Thee as sanctified for the Master's use. We commit this meeting to Thee, and the singing of the hymns, and all of its activity. May we sense Thy presence with us, for we know Thou art with us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Message] Now we are looking at Jesus praying for his apostles. There are some important ancient and contemporary issues that surface in these words that we have just read for our Scripture reading. One of the ancient issues is the issue of the separation of the church from the world. Now we have noticed in verse 14 that Jesus says, “I have given them Thy word and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And then, repetitiously one might think, in verse 16 he says again, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” So our Lord makes it plain that there is a sense in which all believers are separated from the world.

There is a doctrine of biblical separation. Occasionally individuals want to react against it because sometimes people have gone too far in separation, for example in the Monastic orders. Generally the tendency to withdraw and have nothing to do with the world, but only contemplate and meditate that is an attitude that is not supportable by the word of God. It's perfectly all right to dwell in the cloister, but the person who dwells in the cloister must ultimately get out in the crowd, the Monastics tended otherwise. Some of the pietists also tended to overdo the separation taught in the Bible. And then today in our society, some of the rigid fundamentalists also have overdone this. And not only separating from those who do not believe the doctrine of Jesus Christ but have separated from those who are unwilling to separate from those who don't believe. In other words, a second degree of separation is often practiced by them.

Well, our Lord speaks about a true separation. The church is not of the world. The church is different. True believers are different. As Israel in the Old Testament was separate from the nations about them, so the church is now separate from the nations, separate from the world. And so the true doctrine of biblical separation is important. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. Now that's an ancient issue and it does again surface here.

There is a contemporary one that I think is perhaps more important for us, and that is the conflict that rages today over the nature of the church's mission. Now if you read much Christian literature you know that there is a great deal of discussion about what is the church's mission today. Some would like to think that it is altogether spiritual; the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving of lost spirits and souls being the fundamental task of the church, and some would almost want to say the only task of the church. And such secondary issues as doing good in the world, helping the world in a physical sense, as having nothing to do with the work of the church. On the other hand, there is a great deal of opinion today that the church's mission is not primarily spiritual, but rather spiritual and political, or spiritual and sociological, or even spiritual and economic, and the church is to speak politically to all of the issues that face us today. Now I think really that if a person preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ and expounds the word of God he will necessarily be speaking to

the world's political views and he will be speaking necessarily to other views that the world has, because the Scriptures do have their secondary application to those things. And I'd like to say that historically I do not think that any body of people has ever done more for the world than the church of Jesus Christ. That is often overlooked, but it is nevertheless true.

James Wall is the editor of *The Christian Century*. It is a liberal, ecumenical periodical, which I read in order to keep up with what my enemies are saying, [Laughter] and Dr. Wall is a very learned man and writes some very interesting things. And one of the things that he said recently gave me some hope that perhaps there might be a little bit of a change in the periodical. Speaking before a group of Methodists in one of their state conferences in the north in the state of Minnesota he made the affirmation that it was his opinion that perhaps the church had failed in the main line denominations in laying such stress upon the political, and economic, and sociological aspects of the truth, and they therefore had left a vacuum which the evangelicals had entered into and had wrenched from them, and that one could expect a more spiritual approach to things from the evangelicals and a less spiritual but more political approach from the main line denominations. Well I think that was an evidence of some sanctification of *The Christian Century*. But then when one continues to read it one finds the same old emphases; that the work of the church is essentially political, and the doctrine that is propounded is essentially liberal Christianity with no affirmations of certainties that everything being relativistic.

Just recently we've seen an illustration of this in The World Council of Churches meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, in which in the course of the week of that meeting, the one object of the position of the world council of churches, so far as criticism was concerned, was the government of the United States of America. Nothing much was said about the Soviets, because it's obvious, for one reads and studies the writings of those who take a leading part in that, that their views are quite similar to the views that emanate from the Soviets. But it was striking that the source of evil is looked at as being right here in the United States of America. And one of the amusing things to me was that several Russians, individuals who had suffered under the Soviet system, wrote in and asked

them to please take up the fact that there was no freedom whatsoever in the Soviet Union and they refused to do that, because they said in one case it was not on the agenda of The World Council of Churches for that week. It is amazing, but it's sad and true that The World Council of Churches, purporting to represent four hundred million Christians, is more interested in castigating the United States because of the leftist leaning politics of that organization than it is in paying attention to the evils that also emanate from the Soviet Union and the satellites of that great country. It is sad, but it is nevertheless true. It is not surprising that evangelical Christians do not pay a great deal of attention to the pronouncements of The World Council of Churches.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who knows something about suffering under that system, has said a very encouraging thing recently, when he received the Templeton Prize, he said in the midst of an address, “No matter how formidably communism bristles with tanks and rockets, no matter what successes it attains in ceasing the planet, it is doomed never to vanquish Christianity.” And that is true. Jesus said that upon Peter and his confession, “I, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God, he will build his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

John Hutton was an British evangelical of over fifty years ago, and he said in a magnificent statement, I think, “Whenever the lamps burn low in the church and love waxes cold and watchers slumber while the bridegroom tarries, the restorer and sustainer of his people is always standing at the door. He can create fresh witnesses to himself in the most unlikely quarters, even as he raised up Paul from among the Pharisees and Luther from among the Mendicants. The gospel of the grace of God has been disproved a great number of times, it has been assailed and wounded and beaten down and left for dead, but it survives by the power of an endless life. Amid fightings within and fears without, the modern church can still say, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ Who can guess what swift and calculable revival Christ has in store for his desponding people.”

We turn to the word of God with a great deal of confidence, because we know that this is the day of the world, but the day of the given ones, the day of the church is soon to come, and our Lord prayed in the confidence that that day would come. Now he has prayed for himself, that he

may be glorified in the death that he would offer, that the Father may be glorified. He has prayed that the Father restore to him the glory that he had with the Father before he took up his mediatorial work. And he has identified those for whom he is praying, and now he is going to pray specifically for the apostles and those who follow in line with them.

One cannot help but feel, as he listens in on the prayer of our Lord, the deep and abiding love that Jesus has for the given ones. That is something that has really impressed me. I must confess, I have particularly enjoyed re-studying John 17 and giving these messages. In fact, I've enjoyed it so much that I have, although I've preached through John number of times before, I revised my total approach and have lengthened our study out in order to give a little more attention to it, and the blessing has been mine. I have been particularly impressed with the love that our Lord had for the given ones. And I want you to know, I'm one of the given ones. And those who have believed in Jesus Christ are also ones among the given ones. Our Lord's affection is so, his affection for us, is so expressive in these magnificent words.

Now let's look at what he has to say and what he will pray for the given ones. And I know this is contrary to all that homiletics teachers tell you, you should have three points, or if you're a particularly sensational, seven. Well I have only two this morning. I've given a lengthy introduction to make up for the missing one point.

But the first prayer that our Lord makes is a request for the preservation of the apostles and the given ones. We have really a specific expansion of verse 9a. There he had said, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world.” One might have interrupted him at that point and said, were it proper to interrupt someone praying, “You say you pray for them, but what do you pray for them?” Well this is what he prays for them. He prays first for their preservation. That's the negative aspect of his prayer. The second prayer will be a prayer for their consecration, that's the positive side. So here he will pray that they will be kept. Listen to verse 11 and the ideas repeated in verse 15, “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world and I come to Thee holy Father, keep through

Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me” or “through Thine own name which Thou hast given me, keep them.” so here is a magnificent prayer that they would be kept.

Now one can see by the repetition, as well as by the fact that he says, “I used to keep them” that the idea of keeping is the key idea here. Now that is a word that means to protect, to preserve, to care for. He used to keep them, but now he’s going to the Father, and so he asks the Father to take up the care of the apostles and others who are left here, “Keep them,” do it incessantly, do it constantly, may your work be simply that decisive work of preservation of them. One thinks of incessant watchful care, eternal safety, eternal safety in the name that has been given to the Son. Now the name given to the Son, you see the name of God is all that God is, and when the name is given to the Son it means simply that the Lord Jesus has all that God is and further, that he is therefore the full and final unfolding of the eternal Father. So through the name, through all that he is, all the promises find their yea and amen in Christ, they’re fulfilled in him, through that, keep them Jesus prays. Incidentally, his prayers are always answered, and so therefore this prayer that we be preserved is a prayer that should encourage every one of us.

John Calvin, in very vivid words, said, “He brooded them under his wings as a hen doth her chickens, but now when he departeth he prayeth his Father to cover them with his safeguard.” I like that expression, “He brooded them under his wings.” One can imagine a mother hen and her little chicks. And that is the figure that Jesus uses for the care that the Father exercises over his little chicks. So you’re one of the little chickens. And you have the Father, with his safeguard, protecting and keeping you.

We have a lot to talk about today when we talk about security. I noticed in this week’s *Dallas Morning News*, there was an article about the homes that are being built in the Dallas area. And one of the things that has become prominent in the homes that are being built in the Dallas area is a security system. People who are buying homes are buying security systems, so frequently that now builders are going to be putting security systems in homes as part of the original equipment of the home. Just

like a heating system, or an air conditioning system, or refrigerators, or whatever, a security system.

Well anyone who has had any experience with what is happening knows how important that is.

When we came back from Australia, while we were gone our home was broken into. Fortunately, we had a security system, and when the man broke down our front door and came into the house he heard the security system go off evidently, and turned around and left, and so all we had was some dirty, muddy footprints in the entrance to the home, a security system. But even security systems don't work. Not long ago somebody came in our house, fortunately it was a member of the family, walked in the house, the security system did not go off.

But you see, in the spiritual side of things, ah, things are different. There we have a security system that is the best there is. In fact, we read in the Psalms about our security system in Psalm 123, I think it is, or Psalm 121 I should say, verse 3 and 4, “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved, he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” That's the kind of protection we have. And so when the Lord Jesus said, “Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given to me” we have a promise of the finest security system that there is in this universe; a Father who never slumbers or sleeps.

Now there are some magnificent expressions here. I mentioned them just simply to mention them. One could talk for a long time about them. Jesus said twice, I mentioned in the Scripture reading, that he is coming to the Father. Evidently he longed for the embrace of the Father again. He calls the Father “holy Father” because the holiness of God guarantees that he will keep them from the evil one. Just because he is a holy Father, so he will do that.

He mentions the son of perdition. He says, for example, “While I was with them in the world I used to keep them in Thy name, those whom Thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Some have read that as if the Lord Jesus is suggesting that in the case of Judas he was one of the given ones, but he was lost. You don't know how to read the Bible. That text does not say that Judas was one of the given ones, and that one of the given ones lost his given status. No, no, if one looks at the use of that little “except”

clause, and specifically the Greek expression that begins with εἰ μὴ [ei mē] in Greek, and notices Revelation chapter 21 and verse 27 just as an illustration, you will see that this is no statement whatsoever that Judas was one of the given ones. He was not one of the given ones. What is simply means is that, “None of those given to me has perished, the son of perishing,” that is the man of perdition, the son of perdition, “the son of perdition has perished.” That’s all that he says. He was not one of the given ones. If he had been one of the given ones he would’ve been kept. But the fact that he was not kept is evidence that he was not of the given ones.

Now our Lord also stresses again what we have been stressing, because he’s mentioned it previously, the hatred of the world. Notice the 14th verse, “I have given them Thy word and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.” He has lodged the word in them, he has given it to them, and so they have, because of the new life produced by the new birth, their aims, their ambitions, their desires, their goals, the things that motivate them are different than the world. That means that there is no follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who is not fundamentally different than the world. Oh sometimes I know, and you are thinking, well some Christians I know seem to be exactly like the world. Well if they’re exactly like the world in their actions they are fundamentally very distraught in their hearts, and there is a conflict going on there because no born-again follower of the Lord Jesus Christ can ever be truly happy with the world. He may for a time think that this is the thing that will satisfy him, but sooner or later he will discover that he has reached for a mirage, and he will be very unhappy, because we’re different. Our lives are different. We have a different nature. We have been born of God. The word of God has been lodged in our hearts, never to leave us, and we can never be happy with the goods of the world.

Now as a result of that the opposite is true. The world hates the believer in Jesus Christ. One can, at this point, stop and deliver fifty lectures on the manifestations down through the centuries of the hatred of the world for the followers of Jesus Christ. From Nero, and Diocletian, down through the centuries one can trace the quarrel that the world has had with Jesus Christ. They

crucified our Lord. They will ultimately, if given a chance, crucify every follower, true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that raises the question of separation. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. And the world would love to be done with us. The world would be extremely happy if there was no church of Jesus Christ. Those are the facts that Jesus states. The world hated me, it will also hate you. Well how is a Christian to respond? Some Christians have responded in isolation, like the Monastics. They’ve withdrawn from the world to meditate, and to think over spiritual things.

One thinks of Dionysius the Areopagite, who devised a novel scheme to accomplish separation from the world. He built a platform on the top of a stone column. And he sat up there like *B.C.’s* Guru, to whom *B.C.* every now and then in his comic strip goes to ask for light on life itself, “Oh great Guru.” Well Dionysius was a living great guru. And he would climb up for extended times of contemplation on the top of his column, and he would drop down written meditations to his friends below and receive food and other things that he needed to survive up on his platform. So despite this artificial separation, and his asceticism, this patron saint of flagpole sitters ultimately found that physical death is the only permanent separation from the world.

We are in the world, but we are not of the world. So it is not isolation, nor is it amalgamation. Lots of Christians think that is really the goal, “Let’s be one of the world. Let’s be a back slapping, happy, one with everybody around us, in order that we may have an influence.” It never works. It never does, the world hates the gospel of Jesus Christ. What God would have us to be was what Jesus Christ was. He would have us to be in the world, but separate from the world. That’s true separation. Separation is biblical. Not isolation, not amalgamation, but separation, but nevertheless a separation within the world.

One of the best illustrations of this to me was Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish preacher and theologian. For years Mr. Chalmers served as a member of the church of Scotland, dead, cold, in his orthodoxy, until finally one day, like the sun shining on a space that had been dark for ages, the light of the truth of God really pierced his mind and heart, and he literally became a different man.

He was described later as, quote, “A man bustling, striving, organizing, speaking, preaching, with the dust and fire of the world on his clothes, but carrying his shrine with him everywhere.” Well that’s a good picture of a Christian; he’s busy in the work that God has given him to do, he is in the world, he is touching the world, he is busy in the work, and nevertheless he carries within him his shrine so that it is evident that fundamentally he is different from the world.

Now that’s the first prayer. Keep them, preserve them. The second prayer is a prayer for consecration. It’s the positive side. In the 16th through the 19th verse Jesus utters this prayer, and let me remind you that the term sanctify of course, means to set apart for divine use. We dedicate, he consecrates. Our Lord prays for a consecration. And this is a very striking thing. This word that is used is a biblical term. It was a term that was used in the Old Testament for something that was set apart for sacrifice. One can turn to chapters like Deuteronomy chapter 15 and see this. In fact, the term to consecrate in the Old Testament is practically synonymous with to sacrifice. And it’s striking too that this word is a biblical word.

The Greek word, used in Classical Greek, is different from this word. Not greatly different, but different. And so the difference was designed probably to represent the fact that the sense of the word had biblical connotations, derived from the Old Testament of the separation of something for sacrifice. That is, for a purpose, for a mission, for work. And that’s what our Lord is praying. He’s not praying that the disciples may be made holy, morally. He’s praying that they may be set apart by the power of God and enabled to accomplish a particular work. The evidence of that is plain. He says, “I sanctify myself.” That could not be a reference to growth in holiness. He is talking about his mission as the mediator of the new covenant.

And so here, in verse 17, we read, “Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” Now we I say, at times fail to see this because we look at this word “truth” and we say, “Ah that’s the Bible.” Well of course the Bible is truth, but remember when Jesus said this there was no Bible, as we know it with 66 books. We had the Old Testament Scriptures, and that was all. But when Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Thy truth” he could not be referring to what we know as the Bible. Now he

was not referring to anything that is not found in the Bible. And I’m not suggesting that the Bible is not truth, of course it is truth. Today, when we say “the truth” we mean the divinely revealed word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures. But then, he meant all that God had unfolded through the Old Testament preparatory ministry and the New Testament fulfillment in the person of Christ, his person, his words, his work. “Sanctify them through that, Thy word is truth.” That is “the word that I have unfolded, unfolded in my lips, through my preaching and teaching, and unfolded in my life by what I am doing.”

So, “Sanctify them through Thy truth, through the ministry that Thou hast given to me, set them apart, for Thy word is the truth, set them apart for the true task that is to be done.” Even regenerated individuals need divine gracious power to live to his glory, and so Jesus prays, “Consecrate them through Thy truth, in order that they may be sanctified vessels, meat, for the master’s use” as Paul says in 2 Timothy chapter 2. So, we need this and listen, my beloved brethren, and sisters, we have it now. We have this, because our Lord’s prayer is answered. We have been set apart as the people of God for the accomplishment of a task, and that task is a sacrificial task, just as the usage of that word indicates. “Sanctify them, set them apart for a task,” which will be a sacrificial task. That’s what we are to be.

Now Jesus goes on to speak about himself. He says in verse 18, “As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” Well he was not simply a preacher. He was not simply a messenger of God. He was the message of God itself. Sure, he preached, he taught, he healed, but as a person, as a total person, he was the message of God. That’s why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “In olden times God spoke through the prophets, but in these days he has spoken to us in such a person as the Son of God.” So our Lord is the message, and we too have been sent into the world to be not simply messengers, but messages. “Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.” Or as Paul puts it, “We are epistles of Christ” letters ourselves. What do people read when they read your life? What kind of a letter are you? We are epistles, messages.

Now it's striking too that he says, “As you have sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. We are sent to continue his work. And he at the right hand of the Father, now the Father covering us with his safeguard, and protecting and keeping us and enabling us, is to accomplish his purpose through us.

How is this possible? Why it is possible because our Lord Jesus is still alive. It's possible because he is the risen Savior. It's possible because he has sent the indwelling Holy Spirit. It's possible because there is an eternal Father in heaven. And thus, the purposes of God shall be accomplished.

As you know I've been reading a good bit about the Soviets recently, and this massive life of Lenin that I'm reading now, I haven't finished yet, but there are some rather amusing things in it, amusing to a Christian at least. I don't know whether you know this or not, but the Russians are very much attached to a baby picture of Lenin. The picture is in this book, it's one of the many pictures of Lenin in it. It's taken, it was taken when he was four years of age; round faced, thick curly blonde hair, faint smile on his face, deep set eyes, instead of the bullet head, bullet bald head that later took its place. And the Russians look at it and they think it's great. And you may have remembered that some years ago, when one of the Russians astronauts circled the globe forty-eight times, he took that little picture with him. Millions of copies of it have been spread all over Russia. Striking thing about it too is that before the revolution, in Russian homes, in the living room usually in the corner in a raised place, would be an icon and the icon would be of the Virgin Mary or of our Lord.

But since the Russian revolution the Russians who don't believe in worshiping anything, now have in their homes, by the encouragement of the government, an icon, and it's the picture of Lenin. And usually, an electric light associated with it, so there'll be a special light on it in the room, and so when you walk in you'll see the icon over in the corner, Lenin. The government, which is atheistic, believes and encourages the adoration of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov instead of the Virgin Mary, as the Russian Orthodox church liked to do, or of our Lord Jesus Christ. Often, in the

newspapers one will read the clause, “Lenin is always with us.” The Kremlin encourages Lenin worship.

Now I ask you, who’s better off; “Lenin is always with us” or “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” I say, we’re better off, we’re better off. We have the triumphant Christ always with us, at the right hand of the Father, with the Father and the Spirit, working to accomplish their purposes, and they will accomplish it. Jesus says, “For their sakes, I sanctify myself that they also might be set apart through the truth.” Now one doesn’t have to read the Bible much to know that when Jesus said, “I sanctify myself that they might be sanctified” he’s merely saying that “I am going to the cross, I am setting myself apart for sacrifice,” for that’s the sense of the term in the Old Testament, “I am setting myself apart for sacrifice in order that through the sacrifice individuals might be given new life, new motivation, through a new birth, that they might be a new force in the world, which will ultimately triumph in the world itself.”

And let me suggest to you that when Jesus, at the last supper, took the bread and said, “This bread is representative of the body which is given for you” and then took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant, in my blood, shed for the remission of sins for many” this is the interpretation of it. He had just said that, and now he says, “As I have said, I am setting myself apart for the work of the cross that I might die under the judgment of sin, that sinners might be saved, that the given ones might come to faith in Christ, and that the purpose of God may be accomplished.”

The certainties of the church’s mission emerge in this prayer. We are messages of undying truth. We are not purveyors of relativism. Not long ago I read an article in the *Christian Century* on liberalism. Rather interesting because it was written by a liberal. The title of the article’s rather deceiving, it’s “Not All Cats Are Gray, Beyond Liberalism’s Uncertain Faith.” The author begins by saying that the German poet, Heinrich Heine, stood with a friend before the Cathedral of Amiens in France, “Tell me Heinrich” said his friend, “why can’t people build piles like this anymore?” Heine replied, “My dear friend, in those days people had convictions. We moderns have opinions. It takes more than opinions to build a gothic cathedral.”

John Kenneth Galbraith, not known for his conservatism or biblical orthodoxy, said, “Our age is the age of uncertainty.” What is striking about liberalism is the fact that it has no certainty at all. For example, this liberal man says, “Because liberalism takes account of the fact that we human beings cannot rise above the fallibility of our nature, and the finiteness of our perception, reject a narrow-minded, merciless certitude, and instead speaks in a conversational tone.”

I like that. That is misuse of biblical teaching. It is true, we are fallible. It is true that of ourselves we are bound to communicate our finiteness. But what is untrue about this is that God has done something about our fallibility and our finiteness in the gift of the infallible, infinite Son of God for our sins. And because of that, we can have certainty. If there is anything that is true of the Scriptures, it is that the apostles and our Lord speak in tones of certainty, not uncertainty. Do you ever hear the Lord saying, “Now I reckon that this subject may be looked at in several different ways; on the one hand there is the view of, and on the other hand there is the view of, and on the other hand there is the view of, and I’m quite uncertain about which is best, but I rather lean to view number two.” That sounds like one of our evangelical seminaries. That’s the way they speak in theological seminary these days, “Here are six views, and I’m not sure which one is the correct one.” We speak in uncertainties. Our Lord and the apostles spoke in certainties.

The author of this article goes on to castigate, “Lamb’s book of life certainty.” And then at the conclusion, contradictorily it seems to me, affirms that there really should be something certain about the Christian faith. And what was striking to me is he even refers to Harvard University in its founding days. And as you may have known, when Harvard was founded in 1636, they made a profession, quote, “To lay Christ at the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.” And then this liberal says, “And New England sat up and took notice.” And New England will never sit up and take notice until that same approach is taken again. And furthermore, Texas or any other place will not sit up and take notice until we cause men by the grace of God to look at the certainties that are found in the word of God.

Spelunkers, so the author of our article says, when they come to a new cave which they have never investigated, do you know what they always do? Before they go down into a cave that they've never investigated, they always look around for some firm object, and then they tie their ropes or lines to it, in order that they might have a fundamental basis from which to investigate the cave. Our fundamental basis is the truth of the word of God. It is something that is given to us with certainty through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

A man who does not know Christ could never understand that. It's like an individual who's never been in love; he can never understand what love is, you can describe it to him, you can tell all of the strange things that it produces in the lives of those who have fallen in love, but he can never understand love until he has come to fall in love.

And the Christian faith rests upon the infallible certainty of the divine word, but that certainty is only given by God. There can never be any certainty in human reason and human philosophy, because human reason and human philosophy rests upon the uncertain foundation of human reason. May God help you to understand that, and particularly come to an understanding through the experience of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, to the certainty of the word of God and the revelation contained within it. If you're here and you have never believed in Christ, these great promises do not pertain to you, they pertain to the given ones. May God help you to become one of the given ones through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We invite you as an ambassador of him, to receive in free grace, what God has done, right now.

[Prayer] Father how grateful we are for these magnificent words and prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. How unworthy we feel, but how secure we feel in the prayer of the Son of God for us. O God, Thou hast truly provided for us beyond all of our wildest imagination...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]